

The Parish Church of Saint George



PARISH MAGAZINE

An open door in the heart of the City



NOVEMBER 2021

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St. George's Parish Magazine is published on the Sunday nearest the first day of the month, except August and January. Please send contributions to the Parish Office - stgeorgesoffice@btconnect.com.

Views expressed by contributors do not necessarily represent the views of the parish.
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From the Rector's Desk



Dear Friends in Christ,

It has been an unseasonably mild October so far and in fact it hardly feels like autumn at all. At the time of writing, most of the leaves are still on the trees in the churchyard. Yet November is just around the corner and Advent is barely five weeks away.

November will bring a couple of extra services despite the continuing COVID-19 restrictions. Firstly, on Thursday 4th November we will hold our annual All Souls Requiem Eucharist at 7:30 PM (please note slightly earlier time). The parish choir will sing Faure's Requiem and we will remember our loved ones who have died. This year we are compiling a new list of the Faithful Departed so please write clearly any names of loved ones you want remembered on the printed sheets in the Narthex.

Advent Sunday falls on Sunday 28th November this year. In addition to our 11:00 AM Choral Eucharist on that Sunday, we will also have our Advent Carol Service at 5:00 PM. This is a very popular and well attended service of music and readings on the theme of advent.

Like last year, we have decided to have a booking system in place for the Advent Carols, the Christmas Carols (5:00 PM on 19th December) and the Midnight Mass (11:00 PM on 24th December), because of the numbers in the past. This is to ensure we do not exceed the numbers we can safely accommodate in Saint George's, consistent with COVID-19 guidelines. Please use the form provided to indicate which of these three services you wish to attend.

If there is anyone you know of who cannot come to church and who would like to receive Holy Communion at home or who would appreciate a pastoral visit, then please let me know their names and do not assume that I already know about them.

Yours sincerely in Christ,

Brian Stewart

PARISH NEWS

GIFT AID

Thank you to everyone who donates in church using the yellow Gift Aid envelopes available in the pew.

If you are a taxpayer, and you are happy for us to claim Gift Aid on your donation, when using these envelopes please print your name and address in the space provided. (If you regularly donate using the yellow envelope, your name is sufficient!)

Gift Aiding your donation enables the church to claim an extra 25% on top of what you have donated.

COP26 - PLEASE JOIN US.

A rally will be held on Saturday 6th November 1.00pm at Belfast City Hall. Those who are concerned for the future of our planet and all living creatures on it will be turning up to show the participants of COP26 that there is no more time to waste. Action is needed now. Please join the group leaving St George's at noon to meet others at Cornmarket and walk to the City Hall. The more who come the louder is our voice for progress. (See article on page 13)

ADVENT CAROL SERVICE, CHRISTMAS CAROL SERVICE AND MIDNIGHT EUCHARIST

Because these services attract a large congregation, again this year we will have to adhere to the regulation of 1 meter (*just over 3 feet*) social distancing and consequently will have to limit the number attending. For this reason therefore, **for these three services only**, we will be using a booking system, details of which are on the next page. It is our intention to send out the booking form by e-mail attachment, to be completed and returned to jsandikli@hotmail.com

AN APPEAL FOR MORE SERVERS.

As many readers will have noticed, the serving team at the Sunday morning Eucharist has been reduced. There are many reasons for this shortage. Over the next few months there will be some very significant services, and it is important that we have a full team of three servers, (i.e. a Crucifer and two Taperers).



It would therefore be enormously helpful if some people could come forward and join the team. One would not have to serve every Sunday. They would be shown in

advance what it involves. It is easy and above all, it is enjoyable.

Anyone who is interested, please contact Tony Merrick at 028-9042-7739 or 075-8342-4146

Advent Carol Service, Christmas Carol Service And Midnight Eucharist

At St George's, these three services always attract large congregations. This year, as a consequence of social distancing and other Covid-19 regulations, fewer places than usual will be available at each of these services.

Advent Carol Service: Sunday 28th November at 5.00pm

Christmas Carol Service: Sunday, 19th December at 5.00pm

Midnight Eucharist: Friday 24th December at 11.00pm

To book for any of these services, for a maximum of two people, in the same 'bubble', complete the application form on the reverse of this flyer and hand it to one of the wardens, at the end of this service.

For those unable to be in the congregation, you can reserve a place by emailing the Rector's warden at jsandikli@hotmail.com

Applications should be in by **Sunday 21st November**. Late applications will be accommodated if there is space available. We will make every effort to accommodate you at your preferred service(s).

Finally, to avoid our having to turn anyone away, please come down to the church, on the dates of the above services, only if you have a confirmed reservation.

All three services will be streamed online.

Thank you

See application on next page

Advent Carol Service, Christmas Carol Service And Midnight Eucharist

TO APPLY FOR A PLACE at the Advent Carol Service, the Christmas Carol Service and The Midnight Eucharist, please complete this form. Completing the application form does not guarantee a place at a service. We will contact you by email or telephone to let you know if you have been allocated a place.

Please keep your group to a maximum of 2 people, in the same 'bubble', and give the names of both. Give the contact details for both, only if these differ.

Today's Date.....

Name 1

.....

Email address

.....

(please write clearly)

Phone number

.....

Name 2

.....

Email (if different from above)

.....

Phone number (if different from above)

.....

Give your preference for the service(s) you wish to attend by marking 1,2 or 3 against each one

Advent Carol Service ()

Christmas Carol Service ()

Midnight Eucharist ()

SAVING THE PLANET. SMALL STEPS CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE.



Listening to the news on climate change and the effect it is having on our planet can feel overwhelming at times. But rather than sitting back in despair I find it helps to take small steps towards making a difference.

One step I have taken is to make use of a shop called the 'Refill Quarter' at Strandtown (there is also one at 243

Lisburn Road) and it has been a very enjoyable experience. As I have become familiar with the products available, my supermarket list has got smaller and my Refill Quarter list bigger. Down I trot with my empty containers to buy many of my staples such as flour, dried fruit, porridge and herbs and spices. The staff are fantastic, and there is a warm and welcoming atmosphere. Nothing is too much trouble, and I'd recommend the peanut butter machine. There's something satisfying about making your own peanut butter and much nicer than the commercially produced variety.



At the back of the shop is an Aladdin's cave of locally produced eco-friendly treats such as bath bombs, shampoo and soap bars.

Often staffed by the younger generation it gives me hope for the future. So if you're ever in the East Belfast area please pop in and support them. You might be surprised at how



much better you will feel for having the experience. Google 'Refill Quarter' for a product list.

Janet Sandikli

HARVEST CHARITY APPEAL

Our Harvest Appeal this year was in aid of the charity AWARE and we are pleased to report that the magnificent sum of £972 (incl. Gift Aid) was raised. By choosing AWARE, we helped to support those in Northern Ireland affected by depression and anxiety.

A Happy and a Holy One

Paul McLaughlin



My late mother was a great believer in prayer. She made time to join with my brother and me for our nightly prayers and encouraged us to say a 'quick' prayer in the mornings before school where prayers were scheduled throughout the day.

She had prayers for nearly every occasion. For the sick, of course, for the poor, for 'those unfortunates who would never see the face of Christ', for success in examinations **if it was deserved**, for family and friends who had 'gone before us'.

Good Friday, 3pm, found the three of us kneeling before a little crucifix that hung on our bedroom wall, a happy death cross she called it, as we prayed for the suffering of Jesus and in this month of November we were told to offer our prayers especially for the dead.

I thought it all a bit morbid. November was bad enough with rain and cold, dark mornings **and** evenings and the spectre of the Christmas 'tests' looming closer every day. But pray we did and she made it so personal to our family that we lads took to it with a mixture of curiosity and devotion.

All four of our grandparents had died before I was six years of age, but my mother brought them to life by bringing colour to old black and white photographs through storytelling.

Granda Paul, her father, was described in detail, as his long service in the Great War and the Irish Civil War were explained and celebrated. "You're called after him, Paul", she said more than once, "Because he so wanted to see you born". Sadly I suppose, he had missed that event by a couple of days. A gassing and shrapnel wound from the trenches finally taking their toll.

Grannie Rosie, her Mum, whom I had known briefly, was the matriarch who doled out kindness and discipline in equal measure, whose baking skills were legendary, whose wisdom was as well honed as her piano skills and my mother's eyes would become a little teary when she spoke of her.

Dad's father Daniel was praised as 'a good man' and always referred to by her as Mister McLaughlin. He had been lost at sea at the end of the war, but the little picture of him, fiddle under his chin aboard ship, kept him in our thoughts.

Grannie Nellie, Missus McLaughlin always, was claimed as my mother's friend and confidante. A tiny woman with a huge heart, she said, widowed at 39 years of age, dead a decade later from kidney disease. My first real memory is of being lifted up to kiss her in the coffin. A kiss that could not be returned.

‘Pray for them very hard’, said my mother, ‘And they will look after you in their turn’.

I can’t claim to have understood much about that for many years, but my brother and I rhymed off our Hail Mary’s, Glory Bes and Our Fathers with gusto knowing that we were comforting ‘our people’, as my mother called them, on their journey to heaven. We learned quickly that heaven was the prize of prayer .

Those prayers have stayed with me through the ups and downs of my own life. It’s a cliché to call it a rollercoaster. I prefer a carousel, with experiences like fashions going in and out of vogue. And, anyway whichever way it turns, the merry-go-round is still turning, thank God.

As I get older, I realise that my mother’s prayers, sayings and blessings, learned from her own mother, and which I often mocked and made fun of behind her back, have been more important to me than I would ever have admitted.

One particular prayer comes to mind. She would often, but especially in this month of the dead, mention a prayer that intrigued me.

“What does it mean Mammy?” I asked. “It’s the prayer asking for a happy and holy death”, she said matter-of-factly. “For each of us to receive the last sacrament and have our wits about us”.

She told me then that we really can’t ask for anything more in this life and as I think of her today, I am certain that she is pleased to know that it is a prayer that is close to **my** heart.

Even-song

Blest be the God of love,
Who gave me eyes, and light, and power this day,
Both to be busie, and to play.
But much more blest be God above,

Who gave me sight alone,
Which to himself he did denie:
For when he sees my waies, I dy:
But I have got his sonne, and he hath none.

Submitted by Geoffrey May

JOHN LECKEY - August 25th, 1948 - August 5th, 2021



John Leckey, who has died aged 72, was an inspirational figure in the legal system of Northern Ireland who helped to transform public trust in the administration of justice in the jurisdiction.

He is remembered principally as the former senior coroner of Northern Ireland who conducted the inquest, finally realised in 2000, into the murder of at least 29 people in the 1998 bombing of Omagh by the self-styled Real IRA. It was the worst single atrocity of the Troubles. Victims included two unborn, eight-month-old babies whose mother, Avril Monaghan, was also killed along with her mother, Mary Grimes, thus wiping out three generations in a single incident.

It was in this role that he demonstrated a defining characteristic of his career and his personality; an ability to empathise with people, no matter who they were, or what their politics might have been. As Michael Gallagher, who is closely involved in the organisation Omagh Support and Self-Help Group, and whose son, Aidan, was one of the victims, put it: Leckey "was extremely dignified, humane, and professional, able to rise above the circumstances".

Distinguished

His conduct of the inquest into the deaths of those killed in the atrocity "was one of the few moments of that time [1998-2000]" from which he, as a father, could take comfort.

But it was more than that which distinguished Leckey's role in the aftermath of the tragedy. Gallagher describes as "above and beyond what a coroner would normally be expected to do" his treatment of the relatives of the victims.

"He met us [the relatives' victims] in a pre-inquest meeting in the courthouse in Omagh and explained to families what he was going to do, and what was going to happen, that his role was not to really investigate the crime, but to determine what actually happened, he dealt with it in the best way possible and in my view better than anyone else could have done it."

One of the difficulties Leckey faced in conducting the inquest was that, for legal reasons, he was unable to include in his findings of murder the deaths of the two unborn twins of Avril Monaghan. However, as Gallagher recalls, Leckey went out of his way to assert, as far as he was able, the rights of that family. "He requested the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission to appoint a lawyer to represent the family [in respect of the twins]. he went as far as he possibly could to recognise the lives of those two [unborn] children."

However, as his widow, Janet, put it, "whilst much of the focus in the press has been on the Omagh inquest, John conducted many inquests unrelated to the Troubles: baby deaths, motor-bike racing deaths, farm accidents, drug deaths, etc. [He should be] remembered as the man who showed compassion and respect for all those who had sadly been bereaved and whose losses required investigation by a coroner.

"It was a challenging career as Troubles and Legacy inquests became politicised, but he took on all those challenges and never veered from being independent, which probably did not endear him to the 'establishment'."

Quaker Friends' School

John Land Leckey was born in Belfast in 1948, the eldest child of Sheila (nee Land) and Norman Leckey. He was the eldest of three children, including a sister, Ruth, and a brother, Richard, the latter of whom would predecease him.

His parents were farmers at Magheragall near Lisburn, Co Antrim and he was educated at the Quaker Friends' School in Lisburn, although he was Church of Ireland and a member of the congregation of the High Church St George's in Belfast.

After graduating in law from Queen's University, Belfast (QUB) he qualified as a solicitor in 1974, and thereafter joined the firm of John McKee and Son in Belfast, in which he became a partner.

In 1984 he was appointed deputy coroner for Greater Belfast and in 1992 left private practice to become a full-time coroner, becoming senior coroner for Northern Ireland in 2006, a post he held until his retirement in 2015. In 1997 was appointed on a part-time basis as the first Northern Ireland Commissioner to the newly-set-up Criminal Cases Review Commission, and served later as a parole commissioner.

He co-authored, with Desmond Greer QC, the standard textbook Coroners' Law and Practice in Northern Ireland, published in 1998. In 2015 he was awarded an honorary doctorate in law by the University of Ulster, in recognition of his "outstanding public service". He was involved privately with several charities, including Cancer Focus, the Ulster Society for Promoting the Education of the Deaf and the Blind, Radius Housing and the Halifax Foundation, NI. He also sat on an ethics committee at his alma mater QUB.

He is survived by his wife, Janet, and their two sons, Simon and Peter, and his sister, Ruth.

[HE SHOULD BE] REMEMBERED AS THE MAN WHO SHOWED COMPASSION AND RESPECT FOR ALL THOSE WHO HAD SADLY BEEN BEREAVED AND WHOSE LOSSES REQUIRED INVESTIGATION BY A CORONER.

This article first appeared in The Irish Times on Saturday, August 21, 2021 and is reproduced with kind permission.

COP26 - GLASGOW

Why is this Glasgow Conference called COP26?



The story of COP26 is rooted in the 1992 Rio Earth Summit. This is where the U.N. Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) was agreed, which earned near universal acceptance. Ireland, along with 196 countries

(called 'parties' in diplomatic language,) signed up to the UNFCCC. Every year (except last year!) these 197 countries, known collectively as the Convention of the Parties, (COP for short) meet to assess progress and agree the actions which need to be taken next.

What needs to happen in Glasgow?

The latest U.N. Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report was written by 234 authors drawing on over 14,000 scientific studies. Its title is '*Climate Change 2021: The Physical Science Basis*', (August 2021). The U.N. Secretary-General, António Guterres, called the report '*a code red for humanity*'.

COP 21 in Paris in 2015 agreed that civilisation could not easily



survive beyond a 1.5 degrees centigrade increase above average pre-industrial temperature levels. We are presently feeling the effects of just one degree of global warming. However the collective national plans, following the 2015 Paris Agreement, are insufficient to avoid over-heating the Earth. Our

current national plans would lead to a global average temperature increase of 1.5 degrees by 2030 and an increase of *at least* 3 degrees by the end of the century. That would mean a veritable '*hell on earth*'!

Synod & COP26 singing off the same hymn sheet

Members of General Synod will recall the address by the Most Revd John McDowell, Archbishop of Armagh & Primate of All Ireland, who spoke as follows:

"In some ways we have made a good start as a Church, completing our divestment from the extraction of fossil fuels by the end of this year, therefore meeting its target date of 2022. This fulfils a commitment made in resolution of the General Synod in 2018.

But this is not the whole story. Far from it. Investments are one

thing, and difficult enough to get right in this regard. The whole life of the Church, particularly in our parishes, where our main work and witness takes place is quite another. Not least if we are to be responsible ancestors, never mind have any credibility as the People of God with the younger generation, we will need to bake environmental sensitivity and action into our everyday life as a Church. To ensure that a carbon footprint assessment of our parish and personal activities is as natural to us as an Easter Vestry return and that we act on its results.

We cannot honestly challenge governments without also challenging ourselves. The Church of Ireland cannot solve the climate crisis. However, unless we take seriously how we can do what little we can to contribute to that solution, whether that's making zero carbon a parish target (and asking young people to help us do so) or changing our personal life style, our credibility with another generation depends on our willingness to do so. I know that the Church and Society Commission (CASC) are in the process of giving that effort some organising principles in tools in a conference being planned for the spring of next year, and I wish them well in that.” COP 26 in Glasgow, this month, will need to agree legally binding measures, and ways to enforce the national and international actions needed to hold global warming to the 1.5 degrees increase which was agreed in 2015 in Paris. All of us, especially our children, require no less!

From Eco-Congregation Ireland

Dear Friends of Eco-Congregation Ireland

Save the Date!

We are happy to announce an Eco-Congregation Ireland online gathering for all friends in the Northern Ireland/Ulster region!

Title: **Eco Journeys - Past and Future**

Date and Time: **Saturday 4 December 2021, 10.30am - 12.00pm**

This event is open to those in the Northern part of the country who are interested in learning how to start their church's eco journey, work towards their ECI Award and develop their work into the future.

We will hear from three faith communities who have received their ECI Award. They will tell us how they began their journey and how they have continued their work for God's creation. There will be an opportunity for discussion, questions and ideas sharing.

If you would like to attend, drop a line to info@ecocongregationireland.com to book a place and you will be sent the zoom link closer to the time.

Looking forward to hearing from you!

Karen Nicholson

[Eco-Congregation Ireland](#)



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“We will remember them” - Billy Adair

Thomas Hood in his poem "Past and Present" begins "I remember, I remember. . .": and of course on all sides we read "Remember 1690."

In November, the Church too remembers - November 1st, All Saints; November 2nd, All Souls - saint and sinner. Also in November we have Remembrance Day when the fallen in two world wars are remembered in silence by a grateful nation.

When the celebration of Armistice Day (as it was originally called) became accepted, several made claim to having thought of it. A Mr. Holt Thomas said, he wrote to Lloyd George before 11th November 1918, setting out the whole plan just as it was adopted. His aim was "to make the Communist and the agitator think of King and Country, if only for two minutes." A writer in 1924 claimed the originator was Edward George Honey, a soldier who died at Mount Vernon Hospital in August 1922. Neither of these claims has been accepted, and the Royal Archives at Windsor tell a different story.

In 1912 the battleship "Maine" was sunk and a silence was observed in some parts of U.S.A. At President Teddy Roosevelt's funeral there had been a minute's silence. During the First World War the city of Cape Town and indeed other towns in South Africa kept, every day at noon, what came to be called "The Pause": they used to stop work and be silent for three minutes in memory of those engaged in the war - "a direct, intense communion with the absent - the living and the dead."

In October 1919, the South African leader Sir Percy Fitzpatrick, who had lost a son in the fighting, drew the attention of the Colonial Secretary, Lord Milner, to "The Pause" and suggested it might be a fitting way "to bring home to those who will come after us, the meaning, nobility, and unselfishness of the great sacrifice by which their freedom was assured. Lord Milner sent the memorandum to the King's Private Secretary, and the reply came back " The King likes the idea."

A Cabinet meeting was called to receive the proposal to pause for three minutes at 11.00am on the 11th day of the 11th month on the King's recommendation, but strangely, the Cabinet was divided. One argued that three minutes' silence would be a strain, another said that to set up a ritual of this sort would have inconveniences later on when a new generation grew up, knowing nothing of what it was all about. Lord Curzon was against the entire proposal, but somehow he had got it all wrong, for he thought they were suggesting stopping the nation's life for a whole hour! A committee was formed to further discuss the matter and in the end they decided on a two minutes'

silence at 11.00am on November 11th. They included the proviso that the message should be seen to come from the King, and on the morning of November 7th the appeal from the King appeared in the morning papers.

Some wanted the King's Company of the Grenadier Guards to march to the Cenotaph and at 11.00am present arms while the bugles played the Last Post, but the King's idea was that the happening should be religious - "no-one to go out of their normal path of duty, but merely pause and think as they were inclined." Later quite a weight of public opinion wanted November 11th to be declared a public holiday, but this was rejected by the Curzon Committee. It was out of keeping with the objective - no public rejoicing, no dislocation of business, no drinking themselves silly over victory - but to remember the dead with gratitude.

The first Armistice Day of 1919 was a moving experience. Trains halted, stockbrokers paused in their bargaining, judges and attorneys silenced their courts, buses drew in to the side and driver, conductor and passengers disembarked and stood on the pavements, shop assistants did not serve the customers, express trains due to leave at 11.00am left at 11.05am, hospitals postponed operations, and together the nation, the victorious nation, paused for two minutes in silent tribute to their dead and in grateful remembrance of the living.

It was assumed it would be a single day, just the first anniversary of peace after agony, but public opinion would not for a moment countenance such an idea, and demanded that the government turn the day into an annual commemoration, and this was agreed.

In 1920 an Army Chaplain, David Railton, suggested that an unknown soldier be buried in Westminster Abbey and Dean Ryle took up the matter, though the King was not in favour, as he thought the idea rather belated and could reopen old war wounds which time was healing. The Cabinet preferred to accept the scheme, so the body of an unknown warrior was interred in the National Shrine, side by side with the national great. The name "Unknown Warrior" was the suggestion of Field Marshal Sir Henry Wilson, as it would represent the Navy and Air Force as well as the Army.

Then along came Hitler, and in 1945 the whole matter of commemoration was again raised. What was to be done to include both wars? Someone suggested November 2nd, All Souls' Day, but the Protestants did the natural thing - they protested. Another suggested V.E. Day, May 8th, but this would have made the event more of a thanksgiving for victory than a memorial of the dead. The British Legion and the Churches together solved the problem by changing the name to Remembrance Day and ordering it to be kept on the Sunday nearest to November 11th.

This made the commemoration even more Christian, for now the nation could meet in grateful remembrance before God in His own House.

It is fitting and proper to keep Remembrance Day for three reasons.

Firstly, since the memory of a society or a nation is short, it can only remember by ritual acts. The Crucifixion and the power of the Crucified Lord has rested on its daily or weekly representation in the Sacrament of the Altar. So in the annual commemoration of Remembrance Day, the nation will not be allowed to forget what it owes to the sacrifice of her brave warriors.

Secondly, this remembering is not against anyone - no perpetual hate against Germany or Austria or Turkey or Japan. **It brings home to men and women a compassion, and a feeling of the deep suffering of common people.**

It recalls high ideals - liberty, respect for the weaker nations, a resolution to prevent war, love of peace, as peace was never before loved, a memory of the glorious dead, a reassertion of the true value of human life.

Thirdly, it focuses attention on another world, a better and a happier world. Remembrance Day allows Britain to stand in silent contemplation by the saddest grave of all time: to remember the values of justice and liberty, and of the realm of the spirit in a world beyond.

So:

**"They shall grow not old
As we who are left grow old,
Age shall not weary them
Nor the years condemn.
At the going down of the sun
And in the morning
We will remember them."**

MUSIC LIST November 2021

Thursday November 4th

7:30pm Choral Eucharist

Setting

Requiem - *Fauré*

All Souls

Parish Choir

Sunday 7th November

11am Eucharist

Hymn during Procession

Psalm

Setting

Offertory Hymn

Communion Hymn

Anthem

Recessional Hymn

When morning gilds the skies

127

Stanford in Bb and F

There is a green hill **92**

294

Lord for thy tender - *Farrant*

King of Glory **391**

3rd Sunday before Advent

Parish Choir

473

Sunday 14th November

11am Choral Eucharist

Hymn during Procession

Setting

Psalm

Offertory Hymn

Hymn at communion

Motet

Recessional Hymn

O God our help **417**

Darke in F

16

Dear Lord and Father **353**

309

Libera me - *Fauré*

Eternal Father **354**

Remembrance Sunday

Parish Choir

Sunday 21st November

11am Choral Eucharist

Hymn during Procession

Setting

Psalm

Offertory Hymn

Communion Hymn

Anthem

Recessional Hymn

Rejoice, the Lord is King **443**

Little Organ Mass - *Haydn*

132: 1-12

I heard the voice **376**

295

And I saw a new Heaven - *Bainton*

All people that on earth **334**

Sunday before Advent

Parish choir

Sunday 28th November

11am Choral Eucharist

Hymn during Procession

Psalm

Setting

Offertory hymn

Communion Hymn

Anthem

Recessional Hymn

O come, O come Emmanuel **11**

25: 1-9

Missa Secunda - *Hassler*

Hills of the North **7**

290

The Truth from above - *R.V.W*

Wake, O Wake **6**

1st Sunday of Advent

Parish choir

5pm Advent Service

Separate booklet

Parish Choir

A BRIEF HISTORY OF PERSIA - ITS FAITH AND CULTURE (PART 3)

The book of Esther tells the story of a young Jewish woman who became the wife of Xerxes I (485-465 BC) also known as Ahasuerus. As Queen and Empress Esther found herself in a position from where she could save her people from their malicious destruction at the hands of a vengeful courtier and counsellor, called Haman. An ambitious man, Xerxes looked to expand his empire, and in the year 480 BC he mustered a huge army against the fiercely independent Greek city states who, at the time, were more ready to go to war with each other than come together in an alliance against a common enemy. In the book of Daniel Ch. 11 the conflict between Persia and Greece is recorded as a conflict which is about to take place. However, we know a great deal more about Xerxes' invasion because of the systematic record left to the world by the Greek writer, Herodotus. His opus relating the events of this Persian invasion of Greece is known as "The Histories" and as a result of his systematic telling of what took place, Herodotus is now regarded by many historians as the "Father of modern history". Despite overwhelming numbers in the Persian army compared with that of the Greeks, Xerxes' forces were roundly defeated. The Greeks never really forgave the Persians for their attempted invasion. However, it was to be 150 years before the Persian Achaemenid Dynasty would experience the wrath of Greek revenge when Alexander the Great systematically overran the territories of the empire. Alexander the Great was born in 356 BC in the small kingdom of Macedonia. Tutored in his youth by Aristotle, one of the world's greatest philosophers, and trained for battle by his father Philip II, Alexander grew to become a powerful imperialist and his unexpected defeat of the Persian King Darius III at the Battle of Gaugamela is seen as one of the decisive turning points of human history, unseating the Persians as the greatest power in the ancient world and spreading Hellenistic culture across a vast new empire. Alexander owed a tremendous debt to his father for leaving him a world class army led by experienced and loyal generals. But it was Alexander's genius as a leader and battlefield strategist that secured his victory against an imposing adversary deep within enemy territory. Following the death of his father some of the Greek city states which Philip II had conquered rebelled against their new Macedonian king. Alexander knew that he couldn't rule the Greek mainland by fear and brute force alone so he turned his attention back to Persia. He framed his campaign against the Achaemenid Empire as the patriotic retaliation for Persia's failed invasion of the

Greek mainland a century earlier. That conflict featured the famous Battle of Thermopylae, where 300 Spartan warriors made a heroic last stand against tens of thousands of Persian invaders. Whether motivated by Greek pride or the spoils of imperial conquest, Alexander picked up where his father left off and marched into Persia in 334 BC, where his army of 50,000 would be tested against the largest and best-trained fighting force in the known world. It is estimated that King Darius III of Persia was in command of a total of 2.5 million soldiers spread across his vast empire. At the heart of the Persian army were the “Immortals,” an elite regiment of 10,000 infantrymen whose numbers never changed. When a man was killed, another rose to take his place. The Persian cavalry and archers were also legendary, as were the scythe chariots which cut down enemy infantry with their razor-sharp wheel hubs. But there were also signs that the Persian Empire was already in decline. After suffering humiliating back-to-back defeats in Greece in the 5th-century BC, Persia stopped expanding. In the century leading up to Alexander’s reign, Persia was further weakened by a civil war and other internal rebellions. Darius still commanded a massive army, but Persia was receding on the world stage while Macedonia had the momentum of an ascendant military super power. The Achaemenid Persian Empire finally collapsed in 330 BC with the defeat of Darius III and Alexander entered the imperial and cultural capital of Persepolis. However, the reign of Alexander the Great was short-lived. After subduing all of the Persian Empire, his army marched east and got as far as India before turning back home to Macedonia. But he never made it home. At just 32 years old, Alexander died in Persia in the palace of Nebuchadnezzar II in Babylon from a sudden and mysterious illness. After the death of Alexander the Great in 323 BC, the territories he had conquered were divided between his generals, the so-called Diadochi. Alexander’s friend Seleucus Nicator (312–281 BC) became king of the eastern provinces which approximate to modern Afghanistan, Iran, Iraq, Syria, and Lebanon, together with parts of Turkey, Armenia, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan. This huge kingdom had two capitals, which Seleucus founded in around 300 BC (Antioch in Syria and Seleucia in Mesopotamia/Iraq). Seleucus established a dynasty that lasted for two centuries, during which time Hellenistic art, a fusion of Greek and Near Eastern artistic traditions, developed and flourished. Around 246 BC, the Seleucids lost substantial territory in the east, as a nomadic group called the Parni settled in the satrapy (administrative district) of Parthia in northern Iran. In the same period, the satrapy of Bactria (Afghanistan) claimed independence. However, the Seleucid king Antiochus III “the Great” reconquered much of these regions between

209 and 204 B.C. when he campaigned in the east as far as India. In the west, the Seleucid king fought several wars with his fellow Macedonians, The Egyptian forces were crushed in 200 BC and the Ptolemies were forced to cede Palestine to Antiochus, who was proclaimed “Conqueror of the East”. In 196 BC Antiochus crossed the Hellespont and two years later had added the region of Thrace to his empire. This brought the Seleucid empire into direct contact with the dominant Mediterranean power of Rome. In 190 BC Roman soldiers for the first time set foot in Asia, and the following year a Seleucid army of 75,000 met Roman forces numbering only 30,000 at the Battle of Magnesia. Despite the odds, Antiochus was completely defeated, and the Seleucid empire lost its possessions in Anatolia (Turkey). In 168 BC Antiochus IV desecrated the Temple in Jerusalem. In response, the Hasmonaean family organized a guerrilla army against the Seleucids. The leader of the Jewish forces, Judah, known as the Maccabee (“hammer”), captured the Temple and eventually drove the Seleucids out of Palestine. In the same period, the Parni were establishing their power across Iran and Mesopotamia, forming the Parthian Empire. Seleucia was captured in 141 BC By the first century BC, Seleucid power was further undermined when King Tigranes of Armenia expanded his kingdom into Syria. This brought Roman forces back to Asia, and in 64 BC the Roman general Pompey arrived in Antioch, having established Syria as a Roman province and bringing to an end the remnants of the Seleucid kingdom.

Fr. Graeme Pollock and Meisam Khalili



Endpiece by Jo Calder

“YOUR OWN PERSONAL JESUS”

“Your own personal Jesus, Someone to hear your prayers, Someone who cares, Your own personal Jesus, Someone to hear your prayers, Someone who’s thereBy the telephone, Lift up the receiver, I’ll make you a believer.....Things on your chest, You need to confess.....”. These are lyrics from a song written and performed by an electronic music band called Depeche Mode which was a huge hit single in 1987.

This song came to my mind following a recent sermon by Fr Brian. He began by saying how much he admired Pope Francis – I totally agree with those sentiments. For me he is the best Pope the Catholic Church has had in a very long time; coming from a very poor, humble background he knows only too well about poverty and hardship, unlike some of his predecessors who had neither humility, empathy nor understanding. Fr Brian went on to mention an article written by a prominent American Jesuit, criticising a very well-known American evangelical preacher, now dead. Fr Brian didn’t mention who the preacher was, but I admit I wondered if it was Billy Graham, who I’m sure there are very few not aware of him and his preaching style. So, this was how the song came back to mind. At the time, and still today, there is speculation the song was about the American TV and telephone evangelists who were, and still are very vocal in their style of preaching the teachings of Jesus and the Bible. In America there are 25 of the most influential evangelists now preaching their “born again” version of religion.

It seems American Christian fundamentalism initially represented mainly white, northern Protestants who objected to what they felt was too liberal an attitude by society in general, as well as to religious teachings. Of course there are now many Black Americans who also follow the strict, very conservative fundamentalist Christian teachings. I expect the vast majority of these evangelists are genuine in their beliefs, and sincerely endorse what they are preaching, but there are also a few who use their position as Pastors for monetary gain, expecting those who follow them to provide them with a comfortable living. Others tell their congregations exactly how much they should be contributing to the Church, even when some are from poor backgrounds. This appears to be more prominent in America than other countries. Evangelicals basically believe that a person has to be “born again”. I am sure most of us have been “accosted” at some time by street corner preachers, and I have to be honest in saying I don’t like their presumption they are the only ones good enough to go to Heaven because they are “born again”. It seems there was an American historian who said the simplest definition of an evangelical was *“anyone who likes Billy Graham”*. I think it is fair to say there are various Christian “sects” who are identified as being fundamentalist in their religious beliefs - Baptists, Jehovah Witnesses, Pentecostals, Congregational Churches, Plymouth Brethren, and those who attend what is commonly called Gospel Halls. Some also regard the Church of the Latter Day Saints (aka Mormons) as part of the Evangelical/Fundamentalist block. Again I accept these different churches may genuinely feel they are carrying out God’s teachings and

His will, though I find their form of worship suffocating. Dare I say it, here in Northern Ireland we also have the Free Presbyterian Church, an establishment I find not only troubling in it's attitudes, narrow views and teachings, but also disturbing.

My family lived next door to a couple who were strict Plymouth Brethren; they were lovely neighbours, but I found it odd they didn't possess a radio or Television set, the lady always wore a hat, and on one occasion when my mum invited her in for a cup of tea, she politely declined. We found out later they wouldn't enter a home of anyone other than another Plymouth Brethren, let alone take a cup of tea. It didn't matter our family went to Church every Sunday!

I recently watched a programme about an Amish community – apparently there are four different types of Amish. Certainly, I was aware they held strict religious beliefs, and again may be regarded as Fundamentalist. It is well-known they do not drive cars, they dress almost in an eccentric style, and again do not mix with those outside their belief. The Amish were formed after a break-up within the Anabaptist Church by those who followed a Swiss minister called Jakob Amman, and this is where the name Amish came from. It is thought they regard any claim by one person as being 'saved' as an expression of pride, and something to be avoided.

Their belief and behaviour is very disciplined; if a person breaks the rules they may be 'shunned', meaning no-one (including their family) will eat with them or talk to them. The Amish do not try to convert others to their beliefs; they regard themselves as pacifists, and none do any form of military service. They don't have a church building – services take place every other Sunday, are held in their homes which are designed to hold a large amount of people and apparently services can last for 3 hours at a time. Amish clothing is very plain, with some groups only allowed to wear black and white though others can wear muted colours. Buttons are frowned upon because of their potential for being gaudy and the likes of Velcro and zips are banned. Instead, clothes are fastened by pins or hook-and-eye closures. Slightly smarter clothes, such as capes, can be worn for religious services. The younger Amish have to decide between the ages of 18 and 21 to be baptized, and if they decide against this, they must leave the community.

The programme I watched also spoke to two younger members of an Amish community, one a male and the other female, who both decided they wanted to leave and move to cities to lead a less constricted life. Both of the young people had been told by the whole community that if they did then they were never to return, even to see their families. Their families also made it very clear they would never be welcome back to the family home. Both of the young folk were devastated, and visibly upset when told this.

Having watched this programme as well as reading about evangelical and fundamentalist Christian Churches, their beliefs, preaching and their interpretation of the works and teachings of Jesus, it certainly makes me realise how lucky we in St George's are to have the form of Christ's teachings as given by Fr Brian and Fr William.